

For Immediate Release – County of Berks – Press Release

Berks County Recommends Precautions to Fight Avian Flu

Reading, PA — 2/10/2025 — The County of Berks is encouraging residents to take necessary precautions to help prevent the spread of avian influenza (bird flu). Poultry farming is one of the largest agriculture industries in Berks County. The virus poses a significant threat to domestic and wild bird populations and, in rare cases, can impact human health.

“It is important that Berks residents understand that anyone could inadvertently transmit an avian flu virus to a healthy flock,” said Kimberly Fies, Director of the Berks County Department of Agriculture. “If you go hiking in the area, you should make sure to change or disinfect your footwear and clothing before visiting any home or farm that keeps poultry.” Migrating birds who are infected can leave waste behind on trails and in fields. Hikers, workers, or even children playing outside can pick up that waste on their shoes and clothing and inadvertently transmit the virus if they visit a home that keeps a backyard chicken coop, Fies explained.

To reduce the risk of transmission, residents are urged to follow these safety measures:

- **Avoid Contact with Sick or Dead Birds:** If you find a dead bird or notice unusual illness in domestic or wild birds, do not touch them. Report findings to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (domestic) or PA Game Commission (wild).
- **Practice Biosecurity Measures:** Poultry farmers and bird owners should limit access to their flocks, disinfect equipment regularly, and avoid contact with wild birds.
- **Monitor for Symptoms:** Signs of avian flu in birds include sudden death, lack of energy, swelling, respiratory distress, and decreased egg production. If you suspect infection in your flock, contact a veterinarian immediately.
- **Prevent Human Exposure:** While the risk to the public remains low, people in close contact with birds should wear protective equipment and wash hands thoroughly after handling birds or eggs.
- **Stay Informed:** Follow updates from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, and local health authorities for the latest guidance.

The County of Berks remains committed to protecting public health and supporting local agriculture. By taking these precautions, we can help reduce the spread of avian flu and protect our community. For more information, visit www.berkspa.gov/departments/agriculture.

[Click here to view a flyer with prevention tips for Avian Flu from the Berks County Department of Agriculture.](#)

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